

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) today criticized President Bush's FY 2007 budget proposal for cutting over \$9 million from the Beltsville Agriculture Research Center (BARC), including the closure of two BARC labs critical to improved fruit production and vital to our understanding of the nutritional value of fruits and vegetables.

"In 90 years, BARC has grown into the largest and most diversified agricultural research complex in the world," Hoyer said. "Cutting back on critical federal resources would undermine the ability of the Center's researchers to continue their efforts to improve productivity for our family farmers and ensure a safer, more nutritious food supply."

The President's budget proposal would close both the Phytonutrients and Fruit labs – terminating critical research projects and impacting 43 individuals. The Phytonutrients Laboratory focuses on biologically active compounds found in fruits and vegetables which are believed to have a protective effect against heart disease and cancer. The research undertaken at the lab will enable BARC scientists to make recommendations for diet to help support health in the American population.

The Fruit Laboratory is critically important to small fruit growers and consumers on the East Coast, all the way from Canada to the Southern States. Among other things, the laboratory develops small fruit varieties with superior qualities and improves overall fruit production traits.

The President's budget also eliminates funds for a number of important research programs currently underway at BARC.

"The success of BARC is the result of its dedicated and professional staff," Hoyer said. "Researchers are addressing issues of high national priority—protecting our resources from plant and animal disease, improving water quality, advancing renewable energy, and assessing our nutritional needs. It is irresponsible to diminish this effort by closing these two critical labs."

Congressman Hoyer has helped secure hundreds of millions of dollars for both critical research programs at BARC and the renovation and modernization of its facilities.

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